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ABSTRACT

The suburban or rural Short Term Adolescent Rehabilitation Treatment (START) Centers house 20 or 25 youths unable to cope with daily community involvement, yet not requiring institutional isolation or security. This program evaluation monitors the effectiveness of the START program. The report examines in detail the types of delinquent youth committed. Sex, offense, and number of commitments appear to be key factors relative to the type of youth best served by the program. A considerable increase in expenditures occurs when transfers are made. The evaluation advises increased attention in placement, more effective handling within the program, and credit for time spent and goal achievement. Aftercare and recidivism data provide little additional grounds for criticism of the program. (Author/LS)

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# EVALUATION OF FLORIDA'S START CENTER PROGRAMS

PREPARED BY:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM OFFICE
PLANNING COORDINATION UNIT

JUNE, 1978

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# START Center Evaluation

## A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

START (Short Term Adolescent Rehabilitation Treatment) Centers constitute one variety of the small community-based treatment programs offered by the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services Youth Services (YS) component for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents.

The prototypical START Center (SC) houses 25 males or 20 females and is located in a surburban or rural area. Non-urban settings are chosen so as to offer opportunities for outdoor group activities without facing the youth with the stresses and temptations of daily community living. However, relatively close access to community resources is also considered vital.

Eleven Staff are assigned to each START Center: 5 direct treatment staff (superintendent, assistant superintendent, facility supervisor, group treatment leader and assistant group treatment leader), three educational positions (two classroom teachers and a teacher aide), and three support postions (secretary, maintenance mechanic and cook). The staff-to-child ratio for a 20-bed program is thus 1:1.8 and for a 25-bed program, 1:2.3.

The program is planned for youths who have not displayed the ability to cope with the responsibilities of daily community involvement, yet do not need the isolation or security of institutionalization. The START Center programs, by including self-contained educational units, and also by virtue of their less urban settings, are typically more "in-house" and somewhat less community involved than are Halfway House programs. However, START Center populations usually have numerous supervised community field trips and activities and individual SC residents sometimes hold outside jobs with staff approval.

The treatment program places emphasis on understanding oneself and one's relationships with parents, peers, and environment in order to learn to lead more socially acceptable and responsible lives. Residents work on obtaining the necessary skills to cope with and work through everyday problems, through an understanding of

problem-solving techniques, conflict resolution, personal and social development and accepting responsibility for behavior. The core of the treatment program is daily Reality Therapy group meetings held by trained group leaders, who are also readily available for individual counseling. The groups, usually averaging 1½ hours, five days a week, provide the formal focus for a continuous involvement with a controlled "positive peer culture" through which the resident is helped to develop social skills and contingency management techniques which enable him to gradually spend more time in the community.

The thrust of the educational program is to increase options for the youth by providing employability skills as well as enhancing academic achievement. GED programs are provided as well as remedial, regular academic and career education programs.

Ideally, the START Center staff help each entering youth to set realistic individual goals and lay out a personalized treatment plan to assist him/her in achieving those ends. Most START Centers operate with general system "levels", indicated by behavioral objectives which must be achieved in order to gain more freedom and responsibility, and eventually to prove one's readiness for furlough from the program. These levels are usually spelled out in checklists which provide both staff and client with an explicit measure of where the youth is in terms of progress through the program.

There are currently (1978) five START Centers in Florida. Two of these are 20-bed programs for females. Brevard START, located in HRS District VII-B, on the outskirts of Titusville, opened in 1973, and Leon START, HRS District II, in suburban Tallahassee, opened in 1974. While girls aged 15-18 are preferred, the criteria are flexible to include younger girls who demonstrate mature behavior, and many 14-year-olds are in fact accepted.

Male START Centers include Fort Clinch, the first START program, which opened in its state park facility near Fernandina Beach, HRS District IV, in February of 1969. DeSoto START, HRS District VIII-B,

in a rural area 12 miles from Charlotte Harbor, opened in July 1975 as a facility primarily for younger boys, ages 12-14. This facility has operated with a capacity of only 15 since its inception due to lack of residential housing space for the additional 10 residents planned. Hillsborough START, HRS District VI, in urban Tampa, opened in 1974 in a building of the Tampa Mental Health Institute campus. This program was designed as an Intensive START Center with a capacity of 20 boys, and it took as referrals only the "failures" of other community programs. The collocation of this program on a campus with mental health resources provided staff the capability to deal with the retarded and emotionally disturbed youngsters who made up their client population. The program was converted to a regular START Center, taking direct referrals rather than only transfers, in late 1976, although its location remains the same.

A fourth program for males was in operation from 1971 to early 1976 and its population is represented in the recidivism sample for this study. Originally opened at St. John's START near the town of Mandarin, a lease dispute led to the program moving in 1973 to HRS District III, near Crescent City, when it became Putnam START. The Putnam center closed in February 1976 after a shooting incident which brought adverse publicity and community reaction. Attempts to find a suitable facility at a new location and reopen the program were not successful. Legislative action in the 1978 session struck the funding and positions associated with this program.

The estimated cost of START Center programs is $20.55 per child per day, using cost figures from the 1977-78 Operating Budget, and assuming full capacity and 6-month average stays. Thus the total average cost per child is $3,761. The costs do not include such items as departmental administrative overhead, purchasing, program planning and development, legal services, Title XX reimbursement costs or initial capital outlay (OCO).

## B. DATA BASES

Four distinct sources of data are utilized in this report in order to cover all relevant information available on START Center youths. The first source is a computerized data file which includes basic demographic variables plus information on the commitment, placement and subsequent movement, i.e., transfers absconsions, furloughs, of all committed youth. This data file was created in December 1976 with a one-day survey of all youths in commitment programs on that date and is continuously updated from commitment packages and recap reports from all programs.

A cohort comprised of all placements to START Centers* during the period January-April 1977 was selected for this study. With an average length of stay for most YS programs of 6 months, selection of this time frame meant that even youngsters who were transferred from the START Center to other programs should have completed their commitment and been furloughed by October. The time period selected allowed for type-of-exit and length-of-stay information to be included in the report. At the time the analysis for the evaluation was begun the data file was current only through October so extension of the selection period to include more placements would have meant that the program-completion information for these later placements would likely not be available.

The second set of data utilized is information collected for the annual evaluation of YS educational programs in the Training Schools and START Centers. These data include test scores at points of entry and exit from the program, which permit analysis of educational achievement in the basic skills areas of reading, math and language. The educational data presented in this report will be on youths furloughed from the START Centers between July-December 1977.

The third set of data utilized is information on Aftercare (AC), available from Case Review Forms, which are completed monthly on all youths who are under field supervision. Included are reports on the frequency and types of services rendered to the youth, as well as record of violations and type of discharge. This study will examine all

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* There were 5 START Centers in operation during this period: Brevard, DeSoto, Ft. Clinch, Hillsborough and Leon.

Aftercare data for calendar year 1977, for youths furloughed to Aftercare from a START Center. Since the data card is filled out on a youth every month he/she is under supervision, this aggregation of data includes multiple cards on each case, i.e., one for the first month on AC, one for the second month on AC, etc. These data will be analyzed by groupings of number of months on AC, and percentages will be presented rather than number of cases in order to minimize the problems of duplication.

The final source of data for the study is the Youth Services central commitment files, which were checked for recidivism information since furlough. For this data base, it is necessary to select a sample of youths who have been out of the program long enough to allow for an 18-month follow-up of their record of subsequent law violations. The period July-December 1975 was selected for the follow-up study as the latest period for which the files would be complete. The program recaps showed only 98 furloughs from the 6 START Centers* operating during this period so this total number was included in the follow-up. The data were collected in such a way as to allow computation of a recidivism rate for all cases after 12 months out of the program, and also calculation of a second recidivism rate for an 18 month follow-up from furlough.

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* Putnam START Center was in operation as a residential program during this period.

## C. PROFILE OF START CENTER POPULATION

The data file on committed youth showed 93 youngsters placed in START Centers between January and April of 1977. Table 1 displays the basic population profile information.

The budgeted capacity of the 5 START Centers is 40 slots for females and 60 slots for males. Placements for this 4-month period were 53% female and 47% male, indicating that the turnover of females was higher than that of males. Later analyes show that this higher turnover is accounted for by more losses to inactive status (runaways) and shorter tenure in the facility for those females who are transferred to other programs than is the case for male transfers.

The average age of START Center placements was 15.4 years. Approximately one-third (32.5%) of all placements were black youths. The commitment charges for more than half (55%) of the youths were offenses against property. Males were disproportionately responsible for the persons offenses (89%) and the felony property charges (72%), while females account for more than their proportional share of ungovernable charges (93%) and misdemeanor property crimes (70%).

The above data serve to raise a question as to whether the programs' perceived level of security, which is greater than a non-residential program or halfway house although less than a training school, may, in terms of community protection, be required for the male population served, but may not be required for the female population served. If the greater level of security is deemed to be required as a control mechanism for acting out youth then the level of security may be warranted for male and female.

TABLE 1
Population Profile
of Jan-April 1977
START Placements*

| SEX | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Female: | 49 | 53 |
| Male: | 44 | 47 |
| | 93 | 100% |

| AGE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 12: | 2 | 3 |
| 13: | 6 | 7 |
| 14: | 22 | 27 |
| 15: | 30 | 37 |
| 16: | 13 | 16 |
| 17: | 8 | 10 |
| | 81 | 100% |

Mean Age: 15.4 years

| RACE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Black: | 26 | 32.5 |
| White: | 54 | 67.5 |
| | 80 | 100.00% |

| OFFENSE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Felony: Against Persons | 5 | 6 |
| Felony: Against Property | 25 | 31 |
| Felony: Victimless | 2 | 1 |
| Misdemeanor: Against Persons | 4 | 5 |
| Misdemeanor: Against Property | 20 | 24 |
| Misdemeanor: Victimless | 5 | 7 |
| Ungovernable | 14 | 17 |
| Technical | 7 | 9 |
| | 82 | 100% |

* Where the total shown differs from 93, missing information on that variable accounts for the variance.

D. MOVEMENT/MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Further information available from the data file which yielded the profile statistics provides management-oriented data on how the 93 START Center placements were related to and moved through the juvenile justice system during their commitment. Information on placement, transfers and length of stay is important to managers because of its impact on budgets, since there are a limited number of programs available and each is budgeted to handle children for an average of 6 months. Failure to efficiently and effectively handle placed children within this average would result in overspending and overcrowding of commitment programs. Table 2 displays some of this management information.

The great majority (79%) of youths placed in START Centers have been committed for the first time, and for most youths (73%) the START Center is their first placement since being committed. Cross tabulations (not shown) revealed that the population of youths who transfer in to the SCs are somewhat disproportionately likely to be aged 14 or younger and charged with ungovernability or a violation of probation or aftercare rather than a more serious offense. Transfers were not disproportionately likely to be one race or sex rather than the other.

Sixty percent of all START Center placements completed the program successfully and were furloughed. Nearly a third (31%) transferred to another program. Of 29 transfers, twenty-eight youths were sent to training schools and one entered the STEP Wilderness Program. Eight exits were to Inactive Status, i.e., were runaways not returned to the SC, and one exit was an "other loss".* The cross-tabulation of Type of Commitment and Type of Exit (Part D of Table 2), shows that first commitment youths have a higher probability of successful program completion in the START Centers than do youths with previous commitment experience. More than half of those recommitted or revoked were transferred out of the SC to complete their commitment.

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* A check on this case showed that the child was transferred to a local commitment program, whereupon our records discontinue.

TABLE 2
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
STATUS AND MOVEMENT OF
START CENTER PLACEMENTS

| A. TYPE OF COMMITMENT | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|
| First Commitment: | 74 | 79 |
| Recommitment: | 9 | 10 |
| Revocation: | 10 | 11 |
| | 93 | 100% |

| B. TYPE OF PLACEMENT | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|
| Initial Placement: | 68 | 73 |
| Transferred In: | 25 | 27 |
| | 93 | 100% |

| C. TYPE OF EXIT | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|
| Furlough: | 55 | 60 |
| Transfer Out: | 29 | 31 |
| Other Loss: | 1 | 1 |
| Inactive: | 7 | 8 |
| | 92* | 100% |

* One of the 93 placements was still on the active roll at the START Center in October, therefore is not included in the exits.

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TABLE 2 (continued)

D. TYPE OF COMMITMENT, (BY TYPE OF EXIT)

Type of Exit

| Type of Commitment | Furlough | Transfer Out | Inactive | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First Commitment | 47 (64%) | 19 (27%) | 6 (8%) | 72 (100%) |
| Recommitment or Revocation | 8 (42%) | 10 (53%) | 1 (5%) | 19 (100%) |
| | | | | 91 |

E. LENGTH OF STAY AT START CENTER, (BY TYPE OF EXIT)

Length of Stay at SC

| Type of Exit | 0-45 days | 46-120 days | 121-180 days | 181-240 days | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Furlough | -- | 19 (34%) | 29 (53%) | 7 (13%) | 55 (100%) |
| Transfer Out | 18 (62%) | 8 (28%) | 3 (10%) | -- | 29 (100%) |
| Other Loss | -- | 1 (100%) | -- | -- | 1 (100%) |
| | | | | | 85** |

** Seven youths were still committed to the SC but were on inactive (runaway) status, so no length of stay could be calculated.

TABLE 2 (continued)

F. MEAN LENGTH OF STAY (LOS) at START Center (N=85) : 105 days

Mean LOS for Furloughs (N=55) : 134 days
Mean LOS for Transfers (N=29) : 53 days

G. TOTAL LENGTH OF COMMITMENT, BY TYPE OF EXIT

Total Length of Commitment (in days)

| Type of Exit | 0-45 | 46-120 | 121-180 | 181-240 | 241+ | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Furlough | -- | 16 | 24 | 8 | 7 | 55 (100%) |
| Transfer Out | -- | -- | 7 | 5 | 3 | 15 (100%)*** |
| Other Loss | -- | 1 | -- | - | - | 1 (100%) |
| | | | | | | 71 |

*** Fourteen of the youths who transferred out were still comitted in October so their total commitment time could not yet be calculated.

TABLE 2 (continued)

H. MEAN TOTAL LENGTH OF COMMITMENT (in days); BY TYPE OF ENTRANCE AND TYPE OF EXIT

Type of Exit

| Type of Entrance | Furlough | Transfer Out | Other Loss | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Initial Placement | 132 days (N=40) | 175 days (N=12) | 59 days (N=1) | 140 days (N=53) |
| Transfer In | 264 days (N=15) | 314 days (N=3) | -- | 272 days (N=18) |
| Total | | | | 174 days (N=71) |

Other cross tabulations (not shown) revealed that the transfers out of the SCs were disproportionately male, white, and aged 15-16, whereas furlough rates were slightly higher for females, blacks and youths 14 or younger, or 17 and older. all of the runaways (Inactives) were female. There was virtually no difference between youths who were transferred in as opposed to being initially placed in the SCs with regard to type of exit.

The overall average length of stay (LOS) at the START Centers was 105 days, and the variation in stay between youths who were initial placements and those who transferred in was very slight (104.7 days and 107.7 days respectively). However, type of exit from the program was significantly related to length of stay (see Parts E and F of Table 2). Youths who completed the program (furloughed) averaged 134 days stays. The average LOS for transfers was 53 days, although the majority of youths transferred were moved within the initial 45 days of placement, as YS policy specifies must be the case unless there is a new law violation. Thus the data indicate that 62% of transfers are probably individual failures to fit into the program, where 38% (11 cases) represent movement due to a new offense.

Total commitment time (calculated as the number of days from the commitment or revocation order to date of furlough) tends to be longer than the time spent at the START Center. Even youngsters who are initially placed at the SC and furloughed from there may spend a few commitment days in a detention center awaiting placement. However, youths who are transfers either from another program to the SC, or from the SC to a training school (or both), tend to be committed for substantially longer times than non-transfers since they must essentially "start over" in the new program after being transferred. Part H of Table 2 shows that the average total commitment time ranges from 132 days for youths initially placed at and furloughed from the START Center, to 314 days for those who come from and go to another program. The mean total commitment time for all 71 youths included in this table is 174 days, which is within the YS budgeted average stay of 180 days. However, program managers are well aware that extended stays are costly (at an average of more than $25.00 per child per day, for all YS commitment programs), and thus attempt to limit transfers insofar as is programmatically feasible.

One last item of movement/management information to be considered concerns to what extent START Center placements come from within the district where the program is located. Youth Services has a long-range goal of making each district as self-sufficient in resources as is feasible, i.e., providing them with enough commitment programs in each type of treatment modality to meet the needs of most committed youths without having to "ship them away". Given the current number and distribution of commitment alternatives, however, admissions are open to youths from all around the state. Community residential program slots for females and for the younger committed youths are relatively few, which means that children must often be transported a long way to be placed in an appropriate program. Of the 93 START Center placements analyzed for this study, 34% were placed in programs in their home district. The range of percentages of in-district placements was from 10% (Brevard) and 21% (Leon) for the female programs; 23% for DeSoto START with its very young male population; 53% (Hillsborough) and 100% (Fort Clinch) for regular-age male programs. Fewer in-district placements of course means higher transportation costs.

## E. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Data on the educational accomplishments of START Center youth are comprised of pre- and post-test scale scores on a standardized achievement test. The data set includes scores for 65 youths furloughed from START Centers between July-December 1977.

At entry to the START Center, many of the youths were academically far below the grade level one would expect given their average age of 15.4 years. Ninth grade would be the expected grade level placement for 15-year-olds. Table 3A shows that the majority of youths entering START Centers are not performing at a sixth grade level on reading or math. This is a crucial deficiency, since many experts on literacy have said that a sixth grade reading level is the minimum necessary for literacy and adequate functioning in society. A fourth grade reading level is necessary to function minimally.

The educational program at the START Center makes a substantial impact on the youngsters' academic deficiencies. As seen in Table 3B, scores on each component of the test, reading, math and language, show gains of 1.0 to 1.3 grade levels. That these gains are achieved within an average program stay which is far less than a usual academic term makes the progress all the more impressive.

TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT DATA

A. Achievement Level of Start Center Youths at Entrance: Reading & Math

| Grade Level | Reading | Math |
|---|---|---|
| Below 4th grade | 33% (23) | 29% (20) |
| 4th & 5th grade | 19% (13) | 29% (20) |
| 6th grade & above | 48% (34) | 43% (30) |
| | 100% (70) | 100% (70) |

TABLE 3 (continued)

B. Educational Achievement Results: Comparison of Mean Pre-Test and Post-Test Results in Scale Score and Grade Equivalent Terms.

| | Pre-Test | | Post-Test | | Difference: Pre-Post | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Scale Score | Grade Equiv. | Scale Score | Grade Equiv. | Scale Score | Grade Equiv. | |
| Reading | 461 | (5.8) | 497 | (7.1) | 36 | + 1.3 | |
| Math | 436 | (5.7) | 467 | (6.7) | 31 | + 1.0 | |
| Language | 442 | (4.8) | 477 | (6.0) | 35 | + 1.2 | |
| Total Test | 429 | (5.5) | 470 | (6.8) | 41 | + 1.3 | (N=65) |

## F. AFTERCARE INFORMATION

As noted previously, a Case Review Form (CRF) is completed monthly on each youth on Aftercare. The analyses which follow are based on an aggregation of CRFs for calendar year 1977 for youths who were furloughed from START Centers. This aggregation yielded 1482 CRFs on former START Center residents with a range from 0-207* months on Aftercare. From 0-9 months on AC there was an average of 100 forms for each month; from 10-18 months an average of 34 forms; from 19-24 months an average of 15 forms and over 24 months, less than two forms per month.

The technique of arranging the data according to the number of months each youth had been under Aftercare supervision when the CRF was completed allows one to see how AC services vary according to how long the child has been under supervision. Having viewed the data on a month-by-month basis and determined that services vary little within certain ranges of length of AC supervision, the decision was made to present grouped data. The problem of duplication of cases is minimized by simply presenting percentages rather than numbers. Table 4 includes four cross tabulations which show the pattern of service provision to Aftercare cases. All services show a slight decline in frequency of provision as the number of months under supervision increases. These tables show: Part (A): That during 12 months of Aftercare very few youths attend any groups; Part (B): That the largest proportion (about 40%) of cases see their counselors only one or two times per month while approximately one-fifth have no counselor contact between the counselor and the child's parents; and Part (D): That volunteer friends are assigned to a very minor portion of all cases and usually only for the first six months.

For teenagers returned home after several months' commitment to a residential program, school and/or jobs are the major foci. Involvement in one or both of these activities has typically

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* Cases with extremely long AC stays probably are errors in coding; there were 35 cases which showed more than 30 months on AC.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH RECEIVING AFTERCARE SERVICES, BY NUMBER OF MONTHS YOUTH HAS BEEN ON AFTERCARE

A. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES ATTENDING EACH NUMBER OF GROUPS MONTHLY, BY NUMBER OF MONTHS ON AC

| | | Number Months on Aftercare | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-18 | 19+ |
| Number Counselor-led Groups Attended | 0 | 85 | 88 | 90 | 89 | 91 | 99 |
| | 1-2 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| | 3-4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | -- |
| | 5+ | 1 | 1 | -- | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

(N=1482)

B. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES RECEIVING EACH NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS, BY NUMBER MONTHS ON AC

| | | Number Months on Aftercare | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-18 | 19+ |
| Number Counselor Individual Contacts With Youth | 0 | 15 | 22 | 24 | 23 | 37 | 49 |
| | 1-2 | 40 | 38 | 42 | 43 | 29 | 38 |
| | 3-4 | 26 | 25 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 10 |
| | 5+ | 19 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 3 |
| | TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

TABLE 4 (continued)

C. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES WHOSE PARENTS RECEIVED EACH NUMBER OF CONTACTS MONTHLY, BY NUMBER MONTHS ON AC

Number Months on Aftercare

| Number Counselor Individual Contact with Parents | | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-18 | 19+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 | 30 | 33 | 32 | 39 | 45 | 58 |
| | 1-2 | 44 | 43 | 48 | 38 | 44 | 36 |
| | 3-4 | 16 | 17 | 13 | 13 | 6 | 4 |
| | 5+ | 10 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 2 |
| | TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

D. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES WHO HAVE A VOLUNTEER FRIEND, BY NUMBER OF MONTHS ON AC

Number Months on Aftercare

| | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes, Volunteer Friend | 7% | 9% | 3% |

been found to have a significant and positive relationship to avoidance of recidivism.* Only 50% of all START Center Aftercare cases were involved in academic school during their first three months on AC, and the proportion falls off to 42% after six months. Approximately 3% enroll in vocational school, and this pursuit tends to be maintained over time. The proportion involved in paid employment is lowest (22%) in the three months immediately after furlough and averages about 33% thereafter. Perhaps youths try school but then drop out to jobs, or it may simply take several months for an unskilled and under-educated teenager to find work. Overall, approximately two-thirds of the START Center Aftercare cases are involved in school and/or work during their first year out of the program, with this proportion dropping off slightly and falling below 60% after 12 months on aftercare.

The Case Review Form data base provides information on two "outcome" measures, both indications of subsequent law-abiding or law-violative behavior during the post-program period of Aftercare supervision. The first measure, shown in Part A of Table 5, involves violations of Aftercare. Youths in their first three months of supervision and those in the 10-12 month period of Aftercare were least likely to violate. Law violations and technical violations were equally likely in the 4-6 month period of supervision, while technical violations were twice as frequent in the 7-9 and 10-12 month periods. Perhaps as youths approach the time when a decision about discharge would usually be made (average length of Aftercare is approximately 12 months, although a standard of nine months has recently been established), counselors become less willing to let violations slide by without consequence. Generally a youth will not be revoked for a technical violation of his aftercare agreement unless his behavior has on numerous previous occasions been in violation of that agreement. One would expect revocations to occur later rather than early in the aftercare period of supervision.

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* This relationship was found in the analyses presented in the "Annual Evaluation Report of Educational Programs" for both 1976 and 1977.

Part B of Table 5 displays the second Aftercare outcome measure: type of discharge. Of the 107 START Center AC cases discharged during 1977, 65% were honorable discharges, 21% were recommitted or revoked to Youth Services and 2% went to Adult Court. The majority of all cases were discharged within nine months regardless of result. The mean length of AC supervision for those honorably discharged was 11.2 months.

TABLE 5
AFTERCARE OUTCOME MEASURES,
BY NUMBER OF MONTHS YOUTH HAS BEEN ON AFTERCARE

A. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES COMMITTING VIOLATIONS (by number of months on aftercare)

(1977)

Number of Months on Aftercare

| | | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-18 | 19+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Violations | None | 92 | 86 | 88 | 93 | 89 | 93 |
| | New Law Violation | 4 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 2 |
| | Other Violation (Technical) | 4 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| | TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% (N=1482) |

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28-A

TABLE 5 (continued)

B. PERCENT OF START AFTERCARE CASES IN EACH RELEASE CATEGORY (by number of months on Aftercare when discharged)

(1977)

Number of Months on Aftercare when Discharged

| | | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-18 | 19+ | Total | Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Losses from AC to: | Honorable Discharge | 3(2) | 26(18) | 23(16) | 19(13) | 14(10) | 15(10) | 100%(69) | 65% |
| | YS Recommitment | 22(3) | 22( 3) | 21( 3) | 7( 1) | 21( 3) | 7( 1) | 100%(14) | 13% |
| | AC Revocation | 11(1) | 34( 3) | 33( 3) | 11( 1) | 11( 1) | --- | 100%( 9) | 8% |
| | Adult Court | --- | --- | --- | 50( 1) | --- | 50( 1) | 100%( 2) | 2% |
| | Absconder | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 100(2) | 100%( 2) | 2% |
| | Other | 27(3) | 27( 3) | 18( 2) | 10( 1) | 18( 2) | --- | 100%(11) | 10% |
| | | | | | | | | | 100% (N=107) |

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## G. RECIDIVISM

This section of the evaluation examines follow-up data on the 98 youths who furloughed from START Centers between July-December of 1975. The purpose of this follow-up is to determine recidivism rates after 12 months, and again after 18 months, from program completion. Recidivism is of interest to those who fund as well as those who manage programs because it is the most costly form of failure, since the youths return to expensive commitment programs. The definition utilized by Youth Services for evaluation purposes is:

> Recidivism: Subsequent revocation or recommitment to the juvenile justice system, or admission to the adult criminal justice system by being placed on adult probation, given a suspended sentence or committed to a jail or prison.

Table 6 presents the recidivism data for the START Center follow-up population. Twelve months after furlough 23% had become recidivists, yielding a 77% success rate. Eighteen months after furlough the recidivism rate was 32%; reciprocally a 68% success rate. It should be noted that the recidivism rate for females was only half that of males for both follow-up periods.* Males and females also differed on type of recidivism. Females were much more likely to be administratively revoked, usually for a technical violation of their aftercare supervision, whereas males were more often charged with new law violations and returned to court. Four of the five youths with more than one recidivism incidence were males.

The average length of time from furlough to recidivism for those who failed was 226 days, and this time did not differ between males and females. The timing of the failures was dispersed, although all revocations, and 59% of the YS recommitments, occurred within nine months of furlough.

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* The sex ratios of the sample for this follow-up was almost exactly proportional to the ratio of male to female slots in the START Centers as a whole so the total recidivism rates are representative of the population without weighting.

## TABLE 6
## RECIDIVISM

A. TWELVE MONTH RECIDIVISM RATE:

23% recidivism 12 months after furlough

females: 15% recidivism (6 of 41)
revoked : 5
recommitted : 1

males: 30% recidivism (17 of 57)
revoked : 5
recommitted : 9
in adult system : 3

B. EIGHTEEN MONTH RECIDIVISM RATE:

32% recidivism 18 months after furlough

females: 20% recidivism (8 of 41)
revoked : 5
recommitted : 3

males: 40% recidivism (23 of 57)
revoked : 5
recommitted : 14
in adult system : 4

C. MULTIPLE RECIDIVISM:

5 youths (5%) had more than one recidivism during the 18-month follow-up (4 males, 1 female).

D. TECHNICAL VIOLATION OR NEW LAW VIOLATION (by sex):

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Technical Violation | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| New Law Violation | 19 | 4 | 23 |

A comparison of recidivism recults from this follow-up with results from the START Center segment of an earlier study which analyzed a sample of 1973 Group Treatment furloughs shows a sizeable drop in recidivism rate. One must be careful to qualify any statements based on this comparison, however, since the START sample for that study was all male and included only 19 cases.

| 1973 Furloughs | 1975 Furloughs |
|---|---|
| 19 males | 57 males |
| 18 month follow-up | 18 month follow-up |
| 52.6% recidivism | 40.3% recidivism |

## H. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY CONCERNS

The data examined in this report show some detail on the types of delinquent youth handled in the five START Center programs. The five centers include both male and female programs, and offer variants of treatment for both very young and older youth, who have been adjudicated for offenses ranging from status offenses to serious felonies against persons. Consideration of the profile data on sex and offense showed that many females in the START Centers were committed for minor charges, which leads to the suggestion that they might have been handled appropriately in less secure and costly types of programs.

Management-oriented data on movement into and out of the START Centers serves to focus attention on issues such as appropriateness of placement, length of stay and other measures which impact on efficient useage of commitment slots and therefore on cost. Among the findings of these analyses are that first commitment youth are more likely than those previously committed to successfully complete the program, a factor which should be considered in placement proceedings. Transfers from the START Centers accounted for nearly one-third of all releases, and were largely to the more restrictive Training Schools. Most transfers occurred within the initial 45 days of placement, thus indicating that they resulted from some failure to function effectively in the program rather than being due to a new violation which required more secure placement. Thus one might suggest that development of more effective methods of handling behavioral and personality differences within the program rather than transferring the child should be the focus of training efforts and technical assistance from the program specialists.

Being transferred, whether into or out of (or both) a START Center, generally added cosiderably to the total length of time a youth was committed, and each additional day committed costs the state an average of $25. While the mean length of stay at the START Center was only 105 days for the population analyzed, and the average total commitment time(174 days) was within the budgeted six month

(180 days) stay, this time measure must continue to be monitored closely. A means of crediting a youth with time spent and goals achieved in a previous program, so that he/she does not have to "start over" when transferred would help minimize the personal and monetary expense of transfers. However, such objective measures have yet to be developed. The proportion of releases which transfer to more restrictive programs is also a performance measure which is a focus of concern since Youth Services philosophy as well as budget considerations stress keeping each youth at the least liberty-restricting level of programming consistent with public safety and appropriate treatment.

Aftercare data show 15-20% of cases are not seen by a counselor at all, and there is a standard reduction of services as length of time under supervision increases, across all categories of service. However, information on new violations indicate that fewer than 15% had any new violations reported during their aftercare supervision. And 65% of all releases from aftercare are honorable discharges. Thus the outcome of this service decline does not appear to be problematic.

Recidivism data compare relatively favorably with those of earlier studies, and thus provide no grounds for critique of the program.

Overall, it appears that the START Centers represent a fairly stable, cost-effective and important variant in the gamut of Youth Services treatment programs. Monitoring to maintain and improve efficient and effective handling of this clientele is the main directive of this evaluation.

## APPENDIX

### List of Offenses - Grouped

| | |
|---|---|
| **Felony - Against Persons:** | Murder<br>Manslaughter<br>Sexual Battery<br>Armed Robbery<br>Other Robbery<br>Aggravated Assault |
| **Felony - Property:** | Arson<br>Burglary/B&E<br>Grand Larceny<br>Auto Theft<br>Receiving Stolen Property<br>Other Felony |
| **Felony - Victimless:** | Concealed Firearm<br>Narcotic Drug Law Violation |
| **Misdemeanor - Against Persons:** | Non-aggravated Assault |
| **Misdemeanor - Property:** | Unauthorized use of Motor Vehicle<br>Petit Larceny<br>Shoplifting |
| **Misdemeanor - Victimless:** | Marijuana<br>Other Drug Law Violation<br>Alcoholic Beverage Offense<br>Concealed Weapon (exept firearm)<br>Criminal Mischief<br>Trespassing<br>Prostitution<br>Misdemeanor Sex Offense<br>Disorderly Intoxication<br>Loitering and Prowling<br>Traffic (delinquency)<br>Other Misdemeanor |
| **Ungoverable:** | 1st time ungovernable<br>Two previous adjudications |
| **Technical:** | Violation of Probation<br>Violation of Aftercare |